

## How to use direct quotations in your writing

Using direct quotations from sources is an important way to include, or blend, sources into your writing. Following academic writing conventions in your discipline about using quotes is an essential part of practising academic integrity in your assignments. This guide offers an introduction. Always check with your teachers about rules in your discipline or area of study.

### What is a direct quotation?

A direct quotation is a word-for-word extract from a source. Direct quotes are used to include the words (and ideas) from sources in your writing.

All direct quotations must to be referenced and have page numbers noted in in-text referencing if the source is paginated (e.g. has page numbers). Depending on the referencing style guide, there are rules to follow when quoting from a non-paginated source. For example, if using APA referencing style to reference a quote from a non-paginated electronic source, indicate the paragraph the quote is taken from.

### Examples

Short and long quotations are formatted differently in most referencing styles. Make sure you check the rules of the style you are using.

In **APA 7<sup>th</sup> referencing style**, short direct quotations (less than 40 words) are put into double inverted commas – “...” – and inserted into a sentence.

#### Example one: a short direct quotation

Driscoll (2010) argues recycling is “the least cost-effective way to reduce environmental damage caused by mass production and mass consumption” (p. 21).

or

It has been argued that recycling is “the least cost-effective way to reduce environmental damage caused by mass production and mass consumption” (Driscoll, 2010, p. 21).

In the **Harvard referencing style**, short direct quotations (less than 30 words) are put into single inverted commas – ‘...’ – and inserted into a sentence.

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In the **Harvard New referencing style** (from November 1, 2022)

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In the APA 7<sup>th</sup> referencing style, long quotations (40 words and longer) are indented from the left margin by 1.5cm and not enclosed in quotation marks. Use the same spacing for the entire block quotation as you used in the assignment; do not add extra space before or after it. Either (a) cite the source in parentheses after the quotation's final punctuation or (b) cite the author and year in the narrative before the quotation and place only the page number in parentheses after the quotation's final punctuation.

Turner et al. (2010, p. 62) provide a good explanation of the way assignment writing at university involves drawing on and using relevant literature, or existing knowledge:

the most distinctive aspect of university education is the way it is linked to the literature. While assessment is structured to encourage a student to develop new ideas rather than repeat what is already known, it also demands that those ideas are developed from and related to the literature. Not surprisingly, rules and expectations have been established for how to use the literature in any piece of work. The rules are quite strict, although often there is a degree of variation between disciplines and even within disciplines.

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Harvard

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Think of the referencing style guide as a codebook, outlining the rules and conventions you need to follow. Edit your referencing against this 'codebook' to avoid losing 'easy marks'.

## Are quotes an effective way to use sources in my assignments?

For students, the goal when writing assignments is to demonstrate their understanding to the marker.

Using paraphrases demonstrates a much higher level of skill and understanding than including a direct quotation. This is because paraphrasing requires you to understand the source well enough to put it into your own words. In contrast, direct quotations are other people's words, making it more difficult to demonstrate your understanding.

There are easy ways to show a higher level of skill and understanding and practise academic integrity when using direct quotations.

Make sure the quote is:

- relevant to the point you are making in the paragraph (e.g. it acts as relevant evidence)
- from a credible, current source
- blended into the rest of your writing (e.g. inserted into a sentence, introduced and unpacked)
- correctly formatted and referenced.

## When should I use direct quotations?

In many (but not all) disciplines, using direct quotations can be a very effective way to include the words or ideas of credible sources in your writing. However, as a general rule, students are expected to use direct quotations sparingly in assignments and exams.

This rule means you will use only a couple of direct quotations in most assignments, and the rest of the time, you will use paraphrases and summaries to include sources in your writing. Sometimes students are not allowed to use direct quotations at all in their assignments (see more about disciplinary conventions below).

Three reasons to use direct quotations in assignments:

1. if the reference itself is famous
2. you want to respond to the wording of the quote (e.g. agree/disagree with the text of the claim)
3. when you need to include a precise statement of the nature or limits of a concept, principle or theory using an expert from the field.

## Disciplinary conventions about using direct quotes

Disciplines and courses have different rules about the use of direct quotations in assignments.

Often, in Social Sciences, Politics, Education, and Health and Human Sciences assignments, quotations should make up 10% or less of the word count.

It is common in Environmental Science assignments for students to use NO direct quotations at all. Instead, students are expected to use paraphrases and summaries to include credible evidence in their writing.

When analysing texts (e.g. novels, media sources etc.), Creative Writing and Media Studies students often include lots of direct quotations to evidence their analysis.

Assignments about theoretical debates can mean most of the task is about different ways disciplinary experts define and apply concepts. In these types of assignments, students may use quite a few direct quotations to define lots of theoretical concepts.

Always check the assignment description, marking criteria/rubric, and talk to your teacher about the use of direct quotations in your assignments.

## Related Quick Guides

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*How to include direct quotations in your writing*  
*How to use paraphrases in your writing*

*Using paraphrases as evidence*  
*Using reporting verbs to introduce evidence*  
*How to use concepts in your writing*

